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Aporetic State and Extended Emotions: the Shameful Recognition of Contradictions in the Socratic Elenchus¹

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ABSTRACT

The Socratic elenchus is a procedure which tests out the consistency of the interlocutors' beliefs. To this end, it is necessary to carry out, alongside the renowned Socratic strategies (questioning, examples, definitions, etc.), also an emotional process acting inside reasoning and where shame has a leading role. The aporetic state is a good example of the collaboration of emotions and reasoning, growing from the shameful recognition of contradictions. It is a cognitive and emotional acknowledgement of errors that pushes the subject to transform his/her behaviour. The use of emotions is not merely a rhetorical strategy for argumentation; emotions are the elements that embody *knowledge* into a practice capable of transforming life into a *good* life thereby determining the *rational way of living for flourishing*.

The recognition of mistakes does not happen just "in the head" but is "extended" in the public environment that permits the generation of shame. This is the case, not only because shame is a "collective emotion" but because the audience is a necessary component of the catharsis.

My main thesis concerns what I call the "extended elenchus", a process based on the extended nature of the aporetic state. The first section highlights the "necessity thesis", or the role of emotions in reasoning; the second focuses on shame as an epistemic emotion and on the cognitive role played by the audience in the implementation of the "system of shame"; the third addresses the role of cathartic and zetetic aporia.

KEYWORDS

Socrates, elenchus, aporetic state, shame, extended mind, extended emotions

Introduction

The Socratic elenchus is a procedure which tests out the consistency of the interlocutors' beliefs. To this end, it is necessary to carry out, alongside the

¹ This paper arises from the project "Emotions First", which I am carrying out at the University of Edinburgh as a Marie Curie Research Fellow, thanks to a grant from the EU Commission. A previous version of the paper was presented at the 2nd Annual Conference of The European Philosophical Society for the Study of Emotions, University of Edinburgh, 15-17 July 2015. I would like to thank the organizers and those with whom I had the opportunity to discuss my approach, in particular Alessandra Fussi, John Dillon, Edwart Harcourt, Niels Hermannsson, Paolo Maccagno, Dory Scaltsas, Clerk Shaw, Jan Slaby and Luigi Vero Tarca. Their contribution enabled me to rethink and improve the first version of the paper.

renowned Socratic strategies (questioning, examples, definitions, etc.), also an emotional process acting inside reasoning and where shame has a leading role. The dialogue takes the form of a refutation, which is different from Eristic due to its moral purpose: thanks to the critique that it engenders, the dialogue enables the interlocutor to realize his own inferiority, to the extent that he must recognize that he does not really know what he thinks he knows. This feeling of inferiority aims at inducing in him the desire to respond by changing his lifestyle, recognizing in himself the truth he sought. Therefore, the Socratic refutation plays on the feeling of shame that enables the interlocutor to admit his own ignorance.

This aspect is crucial as shame played a fundamental role in Greek civilization. The Athenian citizen had to avoid all situations in which he could appear weak, or he was lost. But Socrates, arguing in the public square, does precisely that: he shows his interlocutors that they do not know what they think they know; he ridicules them and, above all, strips them of their claims.

My thesis is that the audience listening to the refutation was not a mere spectator but had an active role within an extended cognitive process that included Socrates, his interlocutors and the audience. This hypothesis, which I will explain in its main epistemological facets, is based on the recognition of the particular historical period and of the specific functioning of the dialogues.

Socratic dialogues were written not only by Plato but also by other writers.² They represent a particular form of writing emerging in a period in which the oral performance was the most important. Based on the analysis of this historical context, I think it is possible to claim not only that Socrates' dialogues took place in the public square, but also that the dialogues written by Plato and by other disciples of Socrates were performed and read in public.³ In writing the Socratic dialogues, Plato had in mind a specific and well defined external audience: an audience on which he wanted to impress a conceptual change, therefore a change in values and political approach.

My main thesis concerns the existence of what I call the "extended elenchus", a process based on the extended nature of the aporetic state as catharsis in the drama, and is grounded on various premises that I am going to explain in specific sections, providing also items of textual evidence. The first section highlights the "necessity thesis" or the role of emotions in reasoning; the second focuses on shame as an epistemic emotion and on the cognitive role played by the audience in the implementation of the "system of shame"; the third addresses the role of cathartic and zetetic aporia.

² According to Livio Rossetti, we lost approximately 200 Socratic dialogues. Cf. Rossetti, L. 2011. *Le dialogue socratique*. Paris: Encre Marine, Editions Les Belles Lettres.

³ Ryle, G.. 1966. *Plato's progress*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1. *The Socratic method: emotions in reasoning*

My main and general thesis is that the awareness of the role of emotions in reasoning represents a cornerstone of the Socratic method. I argue that the view that Socrates propounded is the reverse of the so-called Socratic intellectualism:⁴ emotion is the more primitive guide to the discovery of the good, since it shows the way to reach knowledge, and has the power to transfer it into our lives.⁵ In this perspective, knowledge concerns every aspect of life and reality. Accordingly, not only do we reach knowledge through emotions, but emotions are also the powers through which knowledge can impact our lives.

The elenchus aims at improving the interlocutor through a process of purification that is capable of changing his whole existence: the goal of the Socratic method is to give birth to a correct mode of life, and, as we shall see, it is precisely the literary aspect of Plato's dialogues that makes this possible.⁶ The literary form allows us to understand the performance of the dialogues: Plato was well aware⁷ that the diegetic-mimetic form of the dialogues allowed the public to participate actively in the process. This participation does not mean, in my opinion, just that the audience could identify with the interlocutor, mirroring his emotional state, but also that the audience played a fundamental role in the entire cognitive process engendered by the dialogue. For this reason, the hypothesis of the extended mind and, more specifically, of the extended emotions, as we shall see in detail in section 4, seems central for understanding this dynamic.

Plato argued that emotions are necessary to *reach* the truth: emotions are not sufficient by themselves⁸ but – and in this perspective we can maintain a moderately rationalist approach – they act within reasoning to enhance the epistemic process.

Plato was the first to explore and gain significant insights into the relation between emotions and reasoning: for instance, Plato's *Sophist* 230b4-230e5 (the “noble sophistry” passage)⁹ clearly shows the bond between the logical and the

⁴ For a critique of the paradigm of Socratic intellectualism, cf. Brickhouse, T., and Smith N. 2010. *Socratic Moral Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵ For a defence of this thesis, cf. Candiottto, L. 2012. *Le vie della confutazione. I dialoghi socratici di Platone*. Mimesis.

⁶ For a literary analysis of Platonic dialogues leading to a maieutic interpretation, cf. Gill, C. 2006. “Le dialogue platonicien”. In: Brisson, L., Fronterotta, F. (eds.), *Lire Platon*. Paris: PUF, 53-75.

⁷ Cf. Plato, *Resp.* III, 395b sgg.

⁸ On the problem concerning whether emotions be necessary or only sufficient to produce a moral judgement, see Sauer, H. 2012. “Are Emotions Necessary and Sufficient for Moral Judgment?”. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 15:95–115.

⁹ For a detailed comment on this passage, cf. Candiottto, L., “Purification through emotions. The role of shame in Plato's *Sophist* 230b4-e5”. In: in Dillon, J., Zovko, M. L. (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference Bildung and paideia: Philosophical Models of Education*, special

emotional levels that can be found in the Socratic elenchus.

In this passage it is possible to isolate a quotation which proves the extension of the cognitive process: Plato argues that the release is sweet for those who attend as listeners and is firmly established for those who undergo the process (the refutation). Besides indicating the presence of an audience, this passage demonstrates how the action of the elenchus affects also the listeners of the dialogue.

Refutation brings the interlocutor to the aporetic state, understandable as an embodied and embedded experience of mistakes, the first step for grasping the truth. The aporetic state is a good example of the collaboration of emotions and reasoning, growing from the shameful recognition of contradictions. It is a cognitive and emotional acknowledgement of errors that pushes the subject to transform his behaviour. The use of emotions is not merely a rhetorical strategy for argumentation; emotions are the elements that embody knowledge into a practice capable of transforming life into a good life, thereby determining the rational way of living for flourishing.

In order to be complete, the elenctic purification needs also a psychological cleansing: in this perspective, it can be obtained only through the collaboration between rationality and emotions, mainly shame. Socrates uses shame as a tool for healing the illness of one's soul and style of life. That is the effect that Socrates aims to achieve through the elenchus, namely the state of *aporia* of the interlocutor. The *aporia* is a mental state of perplexity and being at a loss, that involves feelings, which in turn play a role in the cognitive development of the interlocutor. The aporetic state is not a purely cognitive state; it is a cognitively-motivational state involving emotive elements.

The turning point between the refutation and the maieutical production of the thesis consists in the acknowledgement of one's own inadequacy, a sense of inferiority – a situation that is captured by the Greek terms *aidos* and *aischyne* and which unfolds as an aporetic condition, in other words as awareness of contradiction. The recognition of mistakes does not happen just “in the head” but is “extended” in the public environment that permits the generation of shame. Frustration and the feeling of shame as a result of the dialogic challenge is thus experienced by Socrates, by the interlocutor and by the audience.

2. The central role of the audience for the dynamics of shame

Arguably, the kind of shame pursued by Socrates as a factor of elenctic transformation represents a productive social use of the “system of shame”, adopting the distinction proposed by Bernard Williams between a positive and a negative shame.¹⁰

Shame is often defined as a primitive emotion: it plays a fundamental role in the way our personal identity is constructed through relationships with others (both with peers and hierarchically). In Greek times, dialogues were not for the most part private, but more often public conversations. Acceptance of the refutation therefore had a social value, given the way in which social status was constitutive of individual identity. In this perspective, accepting a public refutation could imply accepting a change of identity.

However, Plato’s dialogues only rarely give testimony of a successful transformation occurring in the interlocutor. This is due to the interlocutor’s attitude towards shame: the feeling of shame can be accepted as a means for self-transformation or hidden to protect a social status. Shame is frequently concealed (through the psychological mechanism of the “shame of shame”) due to social reasons.

In *Euthyphro* (12b4-c1), Socrates argues that where there is shame there is also fear of losing face, and we blush for this reason. What makes us blush is the fear of losing our reputation or, conversely, as Socrates says literally, of acquiring the “reputation of an evil man” (12c1). Shame is in fact experienced in front of other men (15d4-e2).

The interlocutor’s identity depends on social recognition, namely the social attribution of a role; therefore, the interlocutor can hardly accept to forego this safe foothold by openly admitting his errors. Arguably, by outlining the distinction between these two types of shame, it is possible to notice how the purification of the interlocutor implies a turning – or “break” – point within the dialogue, which influences the epistemic outcome of the aporia. Shame as a tool of transformation conduces to the generative phase of the maieutic process and shame as an obstacle to transformation that functions as a resonator for the audience.

In *Charmides* we find, embodied by Charmides and Critias, the expression of these two different ways of experiencing shame. Modesty is connected with shame when Charmides blushes as he does not know whether or not he is wise: thanks to shame, Charmides recognizes his own inadequacy, accepting – at least at the age when he is represented in the dialogue – that he should be accompanied by

¹⁰ Williams, B. 1993. *Shame and Necessity*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Socrates in the research. Critias' shame,¹¹ however, hinders the research, as it triggers a defence mechanism that causes Critias not to admit his shortcomings.

In passage 164 d Critias says he is not ashamed to admit his mistakes; however, subsequently he fails to realize what he had set out to do. As a result of the inconsistency between words and deeds, and of the inability to admit the condition of being in *aporia*, Critias does not admit that he does not know. Therefore, he is unable to make the first step towards a sincere research: he does not recognize his own ignorance. As we can see, shame, depending on the character and the social role of the interlocutor, can either engender or hinder the process of research.

The concealment of shame, however, is not an evidence of the failure of the Socratic method, which uses shame as a tool for transformation. On the contrary, Plato uses the defence of the interlocutor (the way he conceals shame) as an element that, thanks to the involvement of the audience, backfires on the interlocutor himself.

Emotions collaborate with reason not only to purify the soul, but to deliver a message to the audience: the necessity to be aware of the inadequacy of contemporary politicians and teachers. When interlocutors try to protect their social image, their standing is unavoidably compromised. By trying to save face, they lose face. More specifically, interlocutors cannot protect their socially ratified identities insofar as, by attempting to do so, they demonstrate their unwillingness to admit their errors. The audience, realizing that the interlocutor does not acknowledge the shortcomings which, thanks to the refutation, emerged clearly in the dialogue, understands that he is not the person he believes himself to be. This mechanism, which I call "outreach *elenchus*", occurs mainly when the interlocutors are politicians, sophists, and rhetors. In the outreach *elenchus* Socrates carries out directly the refutation of the interlocutor, but the *elenchus* affects indirectly also the audience.

In other words, this *elenchus* increases in size and incorporates the dialogic context, like a stone thrown in a pond that produces a series of increasingly larger circles. This mechanism, however, as we will be explaining in detail in section 4 by emphasizing its extension, demonstrates not only the effect of the Socratic intervention on the audience, but also the role the public plays in the refutation, functioning as a resonator and leading back the refutation to Socrates' interlocutor.

In this perspective, the movement of the refutation is not just similar to that of a stone thrown into a pond, but also to that of a boomerang, which comes back to those who have launched it and which, when used for hunting, allows the

¹¹ Platone, *Charm.* 169 c-d.

hunter to hit an object whilst apparently being thrown towards a different direction. In this sense we could say that when Socrates points indirectly to the public, he does so in order to hit his direct interlocutor: he just needs the active participation of the public, which allows the boomerang to bounce back. The movements exemplified here represent the cognitive and emotional dynamics that develop between Socrates, the interlocutor and the audience, and that find their realization in a specific moment of Socratic dialogue, the aporetic state.

A clear example of this mechanism is present in the *Gorgias* and, in particular, in the figure of Callicles.¹² In 461 c Polus says that Gorgias was ashamed to maintain certain statements, e.g. that he did not know what justice was and that, as he did not know, he could not teach it. The shame that is ascribed to Gorgias is therefore caused by the recognition of ignorance; Polus himself, later, will become a victim of the mechanism of shame by recognizing that, had he expressed his thoughts, he would have fallen into contradiction. Callicles, however, manages to avoid these consequences – the recognition of ignorance and contradiction – exposing accurately the Socratic strategies and individuating in which point of the dialogue Polus gave in and “found himself entrapped in your discourses and could no longer open his mouth, ashamed to say what he was thinking”.

Callicles is not ashamed as he does not identify with the values¹³ that are at the basis of the critique – this is why Socrates had to use another strategy with him, which is based on the extension of the elenchus. In my perspective, the tenacity of Socrates in continuing his dialogue with Callicles is not moved by the hope of changing his lifestyle – this interpretation would ascribe to Socrates a certain naivety – but by the attempt to express explicitly the consequences of such a vision and lifestyle, in order for the listeners and the audience to realize Callicles’ shortcomings and to rebound onto Callicles a critique that compromises his image.

These tools are not specific to every Socratic elenchus, but Socrates uses the public as a vehicle for the extension of the elenchus when he is dealing with those who represent the values of the society he wants to criticize. Accordingly, my claim is not that all the elenchi are extended, but that it is necessary to recognize the existence of this particular form of elenchus. The Socratic elenchus is contextual and is configured into different ways according to Socrates’ strategic purposes.¹⁴

¹² For a detailed analysis of the dialogue according to this paradigm cf. Candiottio, L. 2014. “Elenchos public et honte dans la troisième partie du *Gorgias* de Platon”, *CHORA. Revue d’études anciennes et médiévales*, 12: 191-212.

¹³ According to Adkins, this is a fundamental aspect for realizing the experience of shame. Cf. Adkins, A. W. H., 1970. *From the Many to the One. A Study of Personality and Views of Human Nature in the Context of Ancient Greek Society, Values and Beliefs*. London: Constable.

¹⁴ For our study, it is important to highlight how these changes impact also on the emotional aspect of the dialogue. Cf. Brisson, L. 2001. “Vers un dialogue apaisé. Les transformations

This interpretation could be criticized by referring to another passage in the *Gorgias*¹⁵ where Socrates tells Polus that there are two types of elenchus, the rhetorical elenchus, which is usually used in courts, and the dialectic elenchus, the type used by Socrates. The sharp distinction between these two types of elenchus lies in the fact that, to have value, the first needs a large number of witnesses, whilst for the second to succeed it is sufficient that a single witness recognizes the truth. This difference is linked to the specificity of the Socratic maieutics, which addresses each time a single interlocutor, and to Socrates' refusal to seek consensus and approval from large audiences, as did the orators and politicians of the time. The objection would thus emphasize the fact that Socrates' intervention is usually directed to a single party.

I would reply to this objection by highlighting how the difference between rhetoric and dialectic elenchus is not only methodological, but also related to the Platonic construction of Socrates' public role, which should be understood in opposition to the masters and politicians of his time.¹⁶

Plato is aware that the elenchus has an effect on the listeners, he even uses the audience to induce the elenchus to bounce back on the interlocutor. However, he does not unmask this mechanism for two reasons: firstly, because he is drawing Socrates' image in contrast with that of the masters of the time, and secondly because he wants the strategy to be successful (if the rules of the game were revealed they would lose their effectiveness). Moreover, it is also true that Socrates seeks the consent of only one individual: to do this, however, he needs the active participation of the public in the aporetic state. In so doing, he obtains also the political and rhetorical effect that Plato could not ascribe to Socrates, given the apologetic construction of his figure.

3. *Aporetic state*

According to Anne-Marie Bowery shame, which is linked to the physical reaction of blushing, indicates exactly the aporetic state and the difficulty of recognizing what has been discovered. The interlocutors blush when they have to admit what they would rather not admit, or when they do not know how to respond. According to Bowery, the phenomenon of blushing indicates a turning point of

affectant la pratique du dialogue dans le corpus platonicien". In Cossutta, F., Narcy, M., eds., *La forme dialogique chez Platon: Évolution et réceptions*, 209-226. Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon.

¹⁵ Plato, *Gorg.* 471e-472c.

¹⁶ On Plato's construction of Socrates' character, cf. my article: Candiotta, L. 2013. "Socrate e l'educazione dei giovani aristocratici. Il caso di Crizia come esempio di mascheramento operato dai difensori socratici". In F. de Luise, A. Stavru, eds., *Socratica III. Studies on Socrates, the Socratics, and the Ancient Socratic Literature*, 190-198. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag.

the dialogue, the emergence of real possibilities for a dialogic development.¹⁷

In relation to the aporetic state, it is also important to remember that the Socratic method does not reach a stable definition but, in a Daedalic fashion,¹⁸ it puts in motion all the notions proposed by the interlocutor in order to lead him to recognize his own ignorance. In my view such an outcome, often considered as a skeptic one, should not be understood as an epistemic failure: the object of the method was not to attain a stable definition – as in the case of Prodicus' method – but to carry over the purification from error, which can be achieved only through conceptual contradiction and becoming ashamed of oneself. The Socratic method, despite having a strong sophistic connotation in the use of linguistic and rhetorical strategies, could therefore be turned against the sophists themselves, who could be accused of selling a knowledge that was not as stable as they claimed. The aporetic outcome of the Socratic method can thus be understood as a place in which rationality comes to a standstill, where the paradox replaces firm knowledge and contradiction serves as the best medication against the assumption of wisdom. Exactly in its negativity *aporia* provides the consciousness of errors as the necessary starting point to wisdom. In this way, *aporia* is not only cathartic, as pointed out by the traditional approach, but also zetetic. The zetetic *aporia* underlines how solving particular *aporiai* is part of the search for knowledge. This conception of *aporiai* as puzzles to be solved is not only central for Aristotle (i.e. *Met.* B1. 995a34–b1) but also meaningful for the Socratic elenchus.¹⁹ The roadblock is also “a breakthrough (*euporia*), pointing to the right direction in which to pursue an answer to the question posed by the dialogue”.²⁰

Studies on the so-called epistemic emotions are central to the cognitive phenomenon we are describing: they highlight how emotions – being conceptually vital, and emerging in the course of a practically motivated enquiry – are necessary for thinking. One aim of this paper is to demonstrate how, in the Socratic method, the feeling of shame, connected to the above-mentioned aporetic status, represents also an epistemic emotion.²¹ Socrates was persuaded that deep

¹⁷ A. M. Bowery, “Know Thyself: Socrates as Storyteller”, in G. A. Scott (ed.), *Philosophy in dialogue. Plato's Many Devices*, University Park 2007, pp. 82-110.

¹⁸ On the Socratic method as a Daedalic method cf. Platone, *Euthphr.* 11 b 6-8, *Alc. I*, 121 a3, *Men.* 97 d 6. See Candiotto, L. 2011, «Il metodo adatto per Eutifrone: una calma distanza», *Peitho. Examina antiqua* 1(2), 39-55, in particular 48.

¹⁹ According to Vasilis Politis it is necessary to distinguish these two types of *aporia*, highlighting the point that only the second one refers to puzzlement in itself and, therefore, to the significance of the question as the main drive for the research (see p. 107-109). Politis, V. 2006. “*Aporia* and Searching in the Early Plato”. In J. Lindsay, V. Karasmanis, eds., *Remembering Socrates: Philosophical Essays*, 88-109. Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press.

²⁰ Gerson, L. P. 2009. *Ancient Epistemology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 44.

²¹ Cf. analysis of epistemic guilt in relation to accountability in Morton, A. 2010. «Epistemic Emotions», in P. Goldie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotions*, 385-399. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 395-396.

beliefs revealed by shame were true beliefs about what was right or not right to do²²: shame played therefore a central role in the practice of wisdom.

The Platonic paradigm of knowledge as a vision (originating from the attribution of ideas as object of *noein*) cannot be found in the Socratic method, except as its negation: as a matter of fact, the Socratic discourse leads to a non-vision, to the incapability to see a way out (cf. the etymology of *aporia*) for thought. However, the value of the Socratic elenchus should be grasped intrinsically and in its radicalism: its possible positive value should not be sought in the generation of further knowledge (although this process does take place with the transition from elenchus to maieutics), but in the way it engenders an ethic of care that is able to transform the recognition of powerlessness in the constant search for good deeds. It is necessary to emphasize this aspect in order to grasp the intrinsic epistemic valence of the elenchus, which should not be considered only as a pre-condition to reach a subsequent state of knowledge. The aporetic outcome of the elenchus, therefore, should not be understood in a passive sense: the strength of the aporetic event requires a transformative process that allows us to find, within negativity itself, the key to imagine an otherness.

4. *The extended elenchus*

The study of the primary role of emotions in the Socratic elenchus, as well as the research on the epistemic nature of shame and on the zetetic character of purification through *aporia*, allow me to propose the thesis that the Socratic elenchus is extended. This means that not only the purpose of the Socratic elenchus is external (e.g. in relation to lifestyle), but also its genesis.

I argue that the *aporetic* state is achieved in the elenchus, not only in the interlocutor's mental state; the state is the conclusion of the *elenchus* that is a shared cognitively-motivational state of both interlocutors, Socrates and the dialogue-partner. My position is that the elenctic *aporia* is the external shared dialogical embodiment of the cognitively-motivational state of the two interlocutors in a Socratic *elenchus*.

The theory I employ for explaining the shared state achieved through the *elenchus* is the theory of the extended mind²³ and of the extended emotions.

The theory of the extended mind – a form of active externalism, for which the environment constantly drives one's intellect in an ongoing way – refers mainly to the way in which the human mind extends itself in external technologies:

²² Moss, J. 2005. "Shame, Pleasure and the Divided Soul", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, XXIX: 137-170.

²³ Clark, A., and Chalmers D. 1998. "The extended mind". *Analysis* 58: 10-23.

although this would seem to be very far from the classical age, I believe that Socrates “was using” the audience in the same way as today’s mind “uses” technologies, for a well-defined cognitive purpose: not only the purification from false beliefs, but also (and here we see the need for externalization of the cognitive phenomenon) to bounce back to the interlocutor a conceptual shift concerning his role. According to this model we regulate ourselves through other people: they are there “for me”, they are resources which I use instrumentally, for my own self.

Socrates uses the audience to achieve his objectives: an extended conceptual change, able to impact the ethical and political behaviour of the audience. The cognitive extension takes place especially via the affective channel: in this perspective, I think the configuration of the extended mind as extended emotions is even better recognized as a conceptual paradigm for understanding the phenomenon of the aporetic state. Extended emotions are therefore part of the Socratic method: Socrates uses them as a strategy and a tool to achieve the aporetic status and, through it, a cognitive transformation.

The theory of extended emotions proposed by Jan Slaby²⁴ goes in the direction of “collective emotions”, to be intended both as emotions “common” among the members of a group, and as emotions constituted by all the members of a group at the same time. For this aspect it is fundamental to refer to Prinz’s work,²⁵ even though Slaby holds his distance from the perceptual framework and emphasizes the rich phenomenology of affective states, drawing on Helm in regard to the systematic interrelatedness of the instances of momentary feeling,²⁶ and attaining the concept of “phenomenally extended emotions”.²⁷ Slaby proposes examples of emotions which are very significant for our theme: in his opinion it is possible to encounter extended emotions not only in the general social-interactive domain, but also in the context of art reception and in dialogical interplay.

For Adam Carter, Emma Gordon and Orestis Palermos²⁸ emotions extend beyond the agent’s body to aspects of its dynamic environment. Their proposal is to understand the hypothesis of extended emotions as a novel application of the hypothesis of extended cognition, claiming that, if understood within this conceptual paradigm, their characterization is less radical. Their defence depends

²⁴ Slaby, J. 2014. “Emotions and the Extended Mind”. In: Salmela, M., von Scheve, C., eds., 2014. *Collective Emotions*, 32-46. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁵ Prinz, J. 2004. “Emotions Embodied”. In Solomon, R., ed. *Thinking about Feeling: Philosophers on Emotions*, 1-14. New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ In “Relational Affect” (paper delivered at the 2nd Annual Conference of The European Philosophical Society for the Study of Emotions, University of Edinburgh, 15-17 July 2015) Slaby underlines however how, differently from Helm, he assumes that the relational affect is from the outset transindividual.

²⁷ Slaby, J.. 2014, 42.

²⁸ Carter, J. A., Gordon, E. C., and Palermos, S. O. Forthcoming. “Extended emotion”, *Philosophical Psychology*.

therefore on the justification of the hypothesis of extended cognition.

For our analysis about the cognitive process pursued by the Socratic elenchus, it is enough to highlight here that knowledge does not just happen “in the head” of the interlocutor but is “extended” in the public environment, and this allows the generation of shame. It is not only a question of location but also of determining the type of knowledge that is realized: such knowledge is not just “shared” with both the speaker and the audience; it is also extended in the sense of enhanced or maximized.²⁹ This also clarifies how the regulation of the self always involves the other. Shame is really experienced also by the audience; it is not a “fictional shame”. Not only because shame is a “public emotion” but because the public and dialogical context is a necessary component of the catharsis, through what I call “outreach *elenchus*”, i.e. the public act of purification, which I have already described in its essential features in the section devoted to that topic.

Therefore, Socrates, his interlocutors and the audience form a group: to understand this aspect we must remember that the audience of the Socratic dialogues is not a generic set of listeners, but a very specific audience that Socrates wants to influence using the instrument of the outreach elenchus to trigger an extended elenchus. The audience is composed of the Athenian intelligentsia, a group that has a great weight in the political constitution of morals and customs. As claimed by Williams, one does not depend on generic others, but only on a few others, those whose way of judging is shared by the agent.³⁰ The cognitive dynamic underlying the outreach elenchus is that of an extended elenchus, which expresses the externalization of mind and emotions. The fact that Socrates aims his method – albeit indirectly – at the audience enables us to grasp not only the embodiment of knowledge, but mainly its external origin: by bouncing back the elenchus towards the interlocutor, the audience makes it more powerful. This process takes on not only a political and educational valence towards the audience, but also a cognitive and epistemic significance. It is a synergic process of transformation of both the subject and the environment. In particular, I would like to stress that this kind of elenchus not only purifies the audience, but it affects also the interlocutors who are the object of the confutation: it bounces back and obliges them to recognize the shame they had concealed. Socrates “uses” the interlocutors to ensure that the message he sends them - through the aporetic state experienced by Socrates himself and by the interlocutor - goes back enhanced.

Andy Clark describes the cognitive process as “the actual local operations that

²⁹ Clark, A. 2008. *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension*. New York: Oxford University Press.

³⁰ For an analysis of these terms in Alcibiades’ speech in the *Symposium* of Plato, cf. De Luise, F. 2013. “Alcibiade e il morso di Socrate: un caso di coscienza”. *Thaumàzein* 1: 187-205.

realize certain forms of human cognizing include inextricable tangles of feedback, feed-forward and feed-around loops: loops that promiscuously criss-cross the boundaries of brain, body and world”.³¹ The movement that I described previously, referring to the expansion of circles on the water produced by a stone thrown in a pond, and to the trajectory of a boomerang, which has the ability is to turn back and to hit an object without being thrown at it directly, should therefore be understood within this wide, circular process of continuous entries and exits, intersections and links between the mind, the body and the world. Furthermore, the circularity of this process is expressed by the movement of the boomerang: aerodynamic forces generate a twisting moment that causes the ‘gyroscope’ to proceed and to move on a circular path.

Moreover, the emphasis on the cathartic connotation of aporia within the paradigm of extensive knowledge allows us to understand how such connotation does not imply a passive stance but defines an immediately active source of knowledge, reinforcing therefore the active externalism model.

Therefore, the distinction between cathartic aporia and zetetic aporia we mentioned earlier, referring to the interpretation of Politis, should be considered as an expression of the strength of aporia as a tool of extended knowledge. Shame is generated and has effects in the “society of dialogue”.³²

This emotional knowledge is realizable just in the shared and cathartic setting of the drama.

According to Aristotle, rhetoric favours working on logos in order to lead to the truth (representing a technique of persuasion through logos) but, by doing this, it does not negate the possibility of using the emotional dimension to influence the audience.³³

Moreover, Aristotle was the first to identify extended emotions in the practice of dramatic catharsis and to point to its significance and value for society. He analysed the role of tragedy in the theatre, showing that the tragic events in a play are acted out in the feelings of the audience. The embodiment of the emotions in the engagement of the audience with the tragic plot becomes a deliberative corrective in the audience, balancing their feelings of pity, anger and fear, in the light of the conceived calamity. The Socratic *elenchus* is staged by Plato in performative settings, and is a carefully crafted counterpoise between arguments and feelings in social reasoning interactions. Both practices, as analysed by these great philosophers, give us profound understanding of the interplay and mutual support of emotions and reasoning resulting in knowledge and cognition.

³¹ Clark, A. 2007. “Curing Cognitive Hiccups: A Defense of the Extended Mind”. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 104: 163-192, 164.

³² Vidal-Naquet, P. 1990. *La démocratie grecque vue d'ailleurs*, Paris: Flammarion.

³³ Aristotle, *Rhet.*, book II.

Conclusion

At the core of wisdom – which is the main purpose of the Socratic practice and, therefore, needs to be understood as practical reasoning – there are emotions, seen as forces capable of directing actions towards the good of the individual and of the context in which he operates.³⁴ Nevertheless, we should not think that only “positive” emotions can be a source of improvement in personal and collective life. This paper has attempted to demonstrate, as an outcome which is secondary to the one referring to the extended elenchus, how “negative” aspects of shame and the aporetic state may acquire a positive meaning insofar as they enable us to transform our unquestioned knowledge of reality. Notably, the most effective form of purification for human knowledge is accessible in a dialogic context, in a situation which implies relations with others. In this perspective the extended elenchus takes shape within a conception of extended cognition, where a primary role is played by collective emotions. In fact, the elenchus is the main strategy of the Socratic dialogue, which – albeit often unfolding as a dialogue between two individuals – implies also the presence of listeners who serve as source and receptacle for the process of purification.

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³⁴ Important studies in the field of psychology of emotions have shown how wisdom needs integration between cognition and emotions: for an analysis of the related bibliography cf. Ardel M., Ferrari M., 2014. “Wisdom and Emotions”, in Verhaeghen P., Hertzog C. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Emotion, Social Cognition, and Problem Solving in Adulthood*, New York, Oxford University Press. 2014, 256-272.

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